

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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P R 130522Z MAY 76

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7893

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

S E C R E T AMMAN 2570

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, JO, LE, SY, IQ, SA

SUBJECT: TALK WITH PRIME MINISTER - LEBANON AND SYRIA, IRAQ  
AND SAUDI RELATIONS

SUMMARY: RIFAI SAYS IRAQI OIL CUTOFF IS GREATLY PUNISHING SYRIA. IRAQI-SYRIAN RELATIONS ARE A "DUEL TO THE DEATH". SAUDIS WILLINGNESS TO SELL CRUDE TO SYRIA AT WORLD PRICES IS SLAP IN THE FACE OF SYRIA AND IS IN LINE WITH SAUDI REFUSAL ON HAWK DEAL. SYRIANS JUBILANT ON LEBANON AS RESULT SARKIS ELECTION. SYRIANS PLAN TO PUSH FOR FRANGIEH EARLY RESIGNATION AND ORGANIZATION OF "LEGITIMATE" MILITARY FORCE AROUND CHRISTIANS, SAIQA AND PLA AND A RECONSTITUTED ARMY TO OPPOSE LEFTISTS AND PALESTINIANS (FATEH AND REJECTIONISTS, BUT NOT SAIQA AND PLA). END SUMMARY

1. RIFAI COMMENTED BRIEFLY FOR ME ON A NUMBER OF TOPICS FOLLOWING HIS RETURN FROM MEETING IN DAMASCUS THIS PAST WEEKEND.

2. HE NOTED THAT SYRIAN-IRAQI RELATIONS CONTINUED IN BAD SHAPE. HE CHARACTERIZED IT AS A "DUEL TO THE DEATH" AND SAW NO POSSIBLY OF LETUP. SYRIANS HARD HIT BY IRAQI PIPELINE SHUTDOWN. HOMS REFINERY IS SLOWED WAY DOWN, FIVE THOUSAND WORKERS HAVE BEEN OR WILL BE

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LAI D OFF, AND SYRIA CLAIMS IT WILL LOSE \$360 MILLION IN INCOME

THIS YEAR. SYRIA SENT DELEGATION TO SAUDI ARABIA TO OBTAIN CRUDE AT FAVORABLE PRICES. SAUDIS AGREED TO PROVIDE REQUESTED THREE MILLION TONS AT WORLD PRICES IN LETTER WHICH ARRIVED JUST BEFORE SAUDI FOREIGN MINISTER SAUD BEN FEISAL. SYRIANS TAKE THIS AS A REAL SLAP IN THE FACE FROM SAUDIS. THEY IN EFFECT ASKED IF SYRIA HAD BEEN ON A BLACK LIST SO THAT SAUDI ARABIA WOULD HAVE TO "AGREE" TO SELL THEM OIL AT WORLD PRICES.

3. RIFAI ALSO READ ME EXCERPTS FROM CABLE WHICH HE RECEIVED FROM HIS AMBASSADOR IN BAGHDAD DEALING WITH IRAQI COMPLAINT ABOUT ATTACKS ON "ARAB LIBERATION FORCES" IN TRIPOLI. RIFAI SAID SYRIANS TOLD HIM IRAQI FORCES IN TRIPOLI, LEBANON, TRIED TO TAKE OVER SAIQA AND PLA OFFICES AND POSITIONS. RETALIATION BY SAIQA AND PLA IS SOURCE OF IRAQI COMPLAINT WHICH ALSO EXTENDED TO THEFT OF IRAQI AMBASSADOR'S CAR IN BEIRUT BY SAIQA FORCES.

4. SYRIANS, RIFAI SAID, ARE JUBILANT ABOUT SARKIS ELECTION AND SEE IT AS MARKING DEMISE OF LEFTIST STRENGTH AND A REAL SUCCESS FOR THEM IN THE ARAB WORLD. THEY NOW WILL CONCENTRATE ON FRANGIEH RESIGNATION, FORMATION OF GOVERNMENT, AND THE REESTABLISHMENT OF SECURITY. SYRIANS SAY THAT SAIQA AND PLA HAVE ALREADY ACHIEVED SOME PROGRESS IN CONTROLLING SECURITY SITUATION IN BEIRUT. MAJOR NEXT STEP WILL BE TO GET NEW PRESIDENT TO RECONSTITUTE A LEBANESE MILITARY FORCE UNDER PRESIDENT'S CONTROL. SYRIANS SAY 60 PERCENT OF THE ARMY HAS JUST GONE HOME AND COULD BE PULLED BACK, RECONSTITUTED, AND BE MADE LOYAL TO SARKIS REGIME. SYRIANS SAY LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT CAN THEN COUNT ON CHRISTIANS, SAIQA AND PLA AND NEW ARMY TO MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER AGAINST ATTACKS OF LEFTISTS AND FATEH AND REJECTIONISTS. THIS WILL REMOVE APPEARANCE OF CONFLICT BETWEEN COMPETING EQUAL FACTIONS FROM CURRENT SCENE AND PROVIDE FOR A "LEGITIMATE" FORCE TO ATTEMPT TO BRING SITUATION UNDER CONTROL.

5. I ASKED RIFAI WHAT SYRIANS WERE THINKING ABOUT  
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DISARMING FACTIONS, RIFAI SAID SYRIANS BELIEVE ONLY THEIR REGULARS IN UNIFORM CAN DO THAT AND ARE PREPARING TO LIVE WITH A GRADUALLY EVOLVING SITUATION RATHER THAN TRYING TO INSERT ENOUGH REGULAR FORCES TO DO THE DISARMING JOB. IN ANY EVENT, HE COMMENTED DISARMING IS SOMETHING WHICH WILL HAVE TO COME LATER.  
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